

Draft

**St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church
And Rectory
Designation Report**



**Metro Historic Landmarks and Preservation
Districts Commission**

March 14, 2006

Location

1301-05 West Market Street (Block 14B, Lot 84)

Description

St. Patrick's Church is a Romanesque Revival edifice with a central tower. The main entry is through a recessed, round archway. Over the double doors are four stained glass panels topped by a stained glass fanlight. In the tower above the main entry is a large, round-arch window of stained glass. In the level above is another round arch opening with louvers, topped by a corbel table. Completing the tower are four gables with quatrefoil motif, pinnacles, and a spire. The aisle entries are similar to the main entry. Above each of them is a round-arch window of stained glass. Round-arch corbelling accents the cornice line.

Just to the west of the church is a two-story, brick rectory. Originally three bays in width, the façade now has five bays, with the recessed entry at the far right sheltered by a bracketed doorhood. The tall, narrow windows have brief relieving arches in the first story and round arches in the upper story. A plain cornice crowns the structure.

The original St. Patrick's School building, much altered from its original state, stood behind the church until it was razed in 2004.

History

In 1840, there were approximately 1,000 Irish in Louisville but by 1850 that number had tripled. Most were Catholic and like other immigrant communities, they wanted a church of their own. St. Louis Church had been constructed as early as 1811 and its successor, the Cathedral of the Assumption, was under construction. St. Boniface had been an active German parish since 1838 and the French Church near the Portland Wharf, Notre Dame du Port, had opened in 1840. The Church of the Immaculate Conception on Eighth Street had been an active parish since 1845. St. Martin of Tours Church would soon be built in the Phoenix Hill neighborhood to accommodate the overflow of German Catholics from St. Boniface.

On March 18, 1853, Bishop Martin J. Spalding purchased a plot of land from Thomas Coleman for \$1800.00:

“beginning at the northwestern corner of Market and Thirteenth Street then westwardly eighty feet down Market Street, then northwardly parallel with Thirteenth Street, 125 feet to a street or alley thirty feet wide then eastwardly to Thirteenth Street, then 190 feet to the beginning.”

The first St. Patrick's Church was dedicated on May 28, 1854. The church was a three-story structure 70 feet by 30 feet with a chapel on the first floor, two large classrooms on the second floor, and housing for teachers on the third floor.

Father Thomas Joyce, a son of County Mayo, Ireland, was appointed the first pastor in May 1854.

A group of Xaverian Brothers from Belgium arrived in Louisville from New York on August 11, 1854, and soon after established the first Xaverian School in the United States at St. Patrick's. The first U. S. chapter of the St. Vincent DePaul Society to aid the poor of the parish was also established at St. Patrick's on June 13, 1854.

After 1848, the failed German democratic revolution and the Irish potato famine swelled the influx of immigrants to the United States. By 1850, these newcomers numbered nearly 30 per cent of Louisville's total white population, which was predominately Protestant, and of English or Scots-Irish ancestry. Most of the Germans and Irish were Catholic. Since most of the newcomers joined the Democratic Party, the influx threatened the dominance of the Whig Party. Internal party discord resulted in many Whig Party members joining the American or Know-Nothing Party, which fanned the fear that immigrants threatened both Protestantism and democracy. A vitriolic and partisan local press was quick to warn of the dangerous immigrant "threat."

The sporadic violence of 1854 would become frequent the following year. In the summer of 1855, a newspaper stated unequivocally that the Xaverian Brothers were living in a barracks on the top floor of St. Patrick's and that the brothers intended to drill the young Catholic men of Louisville for a war against Protestantism. A search of St. Patrick's called for by the newspapers found nothing but it was evident that trouble was coming and that the Irish of St. Patrick's Parish would be involved.

On Election Day, August 6, 1855, the Bloody Monday anti-foreigner and anti-Catholic riots began at the intersection of Shelby and Lanier Streets in the East End. The rioters spread down Main Street, burning houses and killing German and Irish immigrants as they went. They arrived at Eleventh and Main Streets where long-time Irish resident Francis Quinn's row of tenement houses lined the street. Houses were set ablaze. Francis Quinn and an unknown number of St. Patrick's parishioners were killed. Fortunately, St. Patrick's Chapel itself was not damaged.

On Sunday, March 24, 1860, before an estimated 12,000 to 15,000 persons, the cornerstone was laid for the new St. Patrick's Church. The inscription translated from Latin reads:

Of America In this year, 1860, Greetings
March 18
Free Country of the United States
Of America 84
Pope Pius IX Pon. Max.

James Buchanan, President
Brian Magoffin, Governor

The first stone of this church of Almighty God is erected in honor of St. Patrick, Apostle of the Irish, invoking the blessings of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Conceived Without Sin, the Patron of the Country and all the Saints, By Very Reverend Benedict Joseph Spalding, Vicar General, Authorized by His Excellency Martin John Spalding, Bishop of Diocese of Louisville, placed and written before all the people.

On April 26, 1860, Pastor Thomas Joyce and the trustees of the parish signed a contract with Mr. Von Sagun in the amount of \$8,500 for work to construct the new church building and rectory. While the new church was being built, the parish continued to worship in the chapel and attend school in the rooms above it. In 1860, eight additional Brothers came to the city and by 1870 there were 53 Xaverian Brothers working in Louisville.

The new church was dedicated on St. Patrick's Day 1863 with a Pontifical High Mass said by Bishop Spalding. The procession was led by the Sons of Erin, The Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Knights of St. John and the St. Vincent DePaul Society.

By the end of the Civil War, the city was expanding and the more affluent Irish were relocating to a newer part of the city around Sixth and St. Catherine Streets in an area that would become known as Limerick. This had some effect on the size of the St. Patrick Parish, but it did not impact its activity or its vibrancy as a force in the Catholic community. In the 1870s, the rectory was enlarged. Improvements to St. Patrick's continued with the addition of stained glass windows and a steeple in 1891.

By the turn of the century, St. Patrick's congregation had dwindled from 1,000 families to 440 families. This was a result of the establishment of St. Cecilia, St. Anthony and St. Louis Bertrand Parishes as well as the influx of industry in and around Thirteenth and Markets Streets. The B & O Railroad Yards had been constructed through Fourteenth Street and businesses servicing this enterprise moved in around the church and school.

Changes continued to take place at the school. Due to overcrowding and the need to modernize, the parish decided to build a new facility. On Nov. 12, 1912, Thomas and Mary Keenan deeded to Bishop O'Donaghue for \$1.00 the property at Sixteenth and Market Streets to be used to build a new school. Work began in October and the new school opened on December 22, 1916. The school was designed by D. X. Murphy & Bro. Architects.

On January 9, 1937, it began to rain and it continued through late that month with the Ohio River cresting at 51.1 feet. Two thirds of the city was under water

including the West End, which was almost totally flooded. St. Patrick Church, however, was dry. Two hundred refugees were brought to St Patrick's School from further west in Portland where they were housed and fed.

In the years 1947 through 1949, St. Patrick's boys were active in sports around the city. One of the star athletes, Paul Hornung, later became an all-star football player, football's "Golden Boy", when he played for Notre Dame. He won the Heisman Trophy and later played for the Green Bay Packers.

After World War II, hundreds of new homes were built in the East and South Ends. African Americans were largely excluded from moving to these areas and blockbusting by white entrepreneurs in the West End drove whites out in large numbers. At this time there was a large exodus of people from Portland. This "white flight" trend in housing would continue throughout the next decade. This, together with the razing of homes, urban renewal, and the encroachment of business and industry resulted in a mass exodus from the parish.

By 1953, there were only 185 students left in the school and only about 150 families left in the parish. However, those parishioners who relocated were still loyal to St. Patrick's and many of them returned to the parish to attend Mass. During the 1952-1953 school year, St. Patrick's boys baseball, basketball and football teams were rated second in the city.

By 1954, the Xaverians had about 14,477 students all over the country and the number of Brothers had risen to 564. Centennial Celebrations were held at all the Xaverian Foundations, but the main celebration was held at St. Patrick Church where their mission in the U.S. started.

In 1966, St. Patrick's School had only 99 students with four teachers and two grades in each of four classes. Officials of the Archdiocese citing diminishing enrollment, decided to close St. Patrick's on Nov. 11. The Reverend Thomas Casper, Assistant Secretary of the Catholic School Board, cited urban renewal and moves to the suburbs as reasons for the decision. "In areas where the Negro population is going up," he said, "there are proportionately less Catholics." The last day for the school was November 14, 1966.

In 1967, the Louisville and Jefferson County Community Action Commission leased the school. Later in 1985, the Archdiocese allowed the African American Community Methodist Church to use St. Patrick's Church for their Sunday services. The last actual Mass was said in the church on Nov. 3, 1985.

In April 1986, the Archdiocese decided to sell all four buildings - the church, rectory, school, and hall. The hall (the original St. Patrick Chapel behind the 1862 structure) was sold to the Cardinal Insulation Company.

A new St. Patrick's parish was established July 7, 1988, in eastern Jefferson

County.

Dismas House Charities applied for a permit to use the church as a rehabilitation residence in 1991 and was given a conditional use permit for the use of the church in March of that year. An extensive refurbishing of the building was undertaken. The interior was painted and redesigned removing the choir loft and allowing it to be used as offices. The exterior of the church was tuck pointed and painted. The Archdiocese still owns the church property and the property contiguous to it but granted a twenty-five year lease to Dismas House.

By the end of April 2004, the Parish Hall, the original St. Patrick's Chapel, was razed.

Significance

The St. Patrick Church, Rectory, and Hall were placed on the National Register of Historic Places on March 1, 1982.

St. Patrick's Church is architecturally significant as one of the finest Romanesque Revival edifices in the city. The church has local and also national significance to the history of Catholicism, being the site of the first Xaverian school in the country and the home of the first American chapter of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. It is also locally significant for the role it played in the development of Louisville's Irish community in the nineteenth century.

Integrity Assessment

The St. Patrick's Church and Rectory retain a high degree of historic integrity evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during its historic period of development. Although altered over time St. Patrick's retains the physical materials, design features, and aspects of construction dating from its period of significance. It retains the qualities that supported its nomination to the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries proposed for St. Patrick's Church and Rectory encompass the extant resources associated with the development of the historic religious complex between 1853 and 1985 when the last Catholic service was held and is located at Thirteenth and Market Streets. The white line on the aerial photograph below delineates the landmark boundary.



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Designer: Richard Jett Cartographer: L. Wells ArcGIS 9 H Mapshot06020.mxd Date: 2006 Feb 23

Sources of Information

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Kentucky Historic Resources Inventory Form, Hugh B. Foshee, researcher, Landmarks Commission, September 30, 1980.

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In considering the designation of any neighborhood, area, Property or Structure in the Jefferson County as a Local Landmark, or District, the Commission shall apply the following criteria with respect to such Structure, Property or District:

Local Landmark Designation Criteria	Comments	Meets	Does Not Meet
(a) Its character, interest, or value as part of the development or heritage of Louisville Metro, Jefferson County, the Commonwealth, or the United States.	St. Patrick's Church is locally and nationally significant to the history of Catholicism, being the site of the first Xaverian school in the country and the home of the first American chapter of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.	X	
(b) Its exemplification of the historic, aesthetic, architectural, archaeological, prehistoric or historic archaeological, educational, economic, or cultural heritage of Louisville Metro Jefferson County, the commonwealth, or the nation.	St. Patrick's Church is locally significant for the role it played in the development of Louisville's Irish community in the nineteenth century.	X	
(c) Its location as a site of a significant historic event.	A group of Xaverian Brothers from Belgium arrived in Louisville from New York on August 11, 1854, and soon after established the first Xaverian School in the United States at St. Patrick's. The first U. S. chapter of the St. Vincent DePaul Society to aid the poor of the parish was also established at St. Patrick's on June 13, 1854.	X	
(d) Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of Louisville Metro, Jefferson County, the commonwealth, or the nation.	Bishop Martin J. Spalding, one of the first two Americans educated and ordained in Rome, founded St. Patrick's. Bishop Spalding brought the first Xaverian Brothers in America to Louisville. Prominent parishioners included Col. Matt Winn, and Paul Hornung.	X	

Local Landmark Designation Criteria	Comments	Meets	Does Not Meet
(e) Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen	St. Patrick's Church is architecturally significant as one of the finest Romanesque Revival edifices in the city.	X	
(f) Its identification as the work of an architect, landscape architect, or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of Louisville Metro, Jefferson County, the commonwealth, or the nation.			X
(g) Its embodiment of elements or architectural design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship, which represents a significant architectural innovation.			X
(h) Its relationship to other distinctive areas, which are eligible for preservation according to a plan based on an historic, cultural, or architectural motif.	St. Patrick's Church, Rectory, and Hall were placed on the National Register of Historic Places on March 1, 1982.	X	
(i) Its unique location or physical characteristics representing an established and familiar visual feature or which reinforce the physical continuity of a neighborhood, area, or place within Louisville Metro.	St. Patrick's developed and prospered in one of the first areas in Louisville to witness residential, institutional, and industrial expansion in the nineteenth century.	X	

G: Urban Design/Landmark/St. Patrick's Designation Report



